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Articles in Today's Clips

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Senate takes up law to require computer techs to report child porn

Posted by [Emily Monacelli | The Grand Rapids Press](#) June 02, 2008
16:49PM

LANSING -- Some call it a tool to catch people in possession of child pornography. Others call it an invasion of privacy.



Dan Tomaszewski, owner of Georgetown Township-based Computer House Calls, works in his office Monday. He and the technicians who work for his company do not search clients' computers for illegal materials but, when they happened upon child pornography last year, they reported it to authorities. Tomaszewski will testify Tuesday in Lansing about a bill that would require computer technicians to report child pornography they may see while repairing a computers.

The state Senate Judiciary Committee will hear testimony Tuesday on a bill that would require computer technicians to report any child pornography they find on a client's computer.

The hearing on the bill, introduced by Sen. Wayne Kuipers, R-Holland, will include testimony from Dan Tomaszewski, of Georgetown Township-based Computer House Calls, and local law enforcement.

Tomaszewski brought the issue to Kuipers last year after his company found child pornography while repairing the computer of Grand Rapids resident Michael Robert Brown, 52. Although his company reported it to law enforcement, there was no law requiring it to do so.

"The most important thing is, right now, we are not required to report any cases of child pornography," Tomaszewski said. He noted current laws do offer a computer technician legal

protection should he or she tell authorities about child pornography found on a client's computer.

While the proposed law would allow computer technicians to report child pornography they see in the course of working on a computer, they would not be allowed to search a computer specifically for the images, Tomaszewski said.

"We do respect the customer's privacy," he said. "We do not go looking for it, but if we discover it in the course of our job, we turn it in."

Computer House Calls had two instances last year where technicians found child pornography on a computer and turned it in to authorities, he said.

Kuipers said this law would help police weed out people in possession of child pornography.

"They have difficulty sometimes finding this information and finding the people who are responsible for trafficking (child pornography)," he said. "We want to give them some additional tools."

Laws stating that computer technicians must report child pornography they see while working have been passed in at least five states -- Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, South Carolina and South Dakota, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

South Carolina's law drew criticism in 2001 from a lawyer with the American Civil Liberties Union, who said it was an invasion of privacy.

Michigan's bill is [drawing some criticism](#). Some comments label the bill "totalitarian" and "invasive."

Kuipers said he hasn't heard of any formal opposition to the bill so far.

"My guess is that if there is opposition, they'll come forward tomorrow," he said.

MIRS Capitol Capsule, Friday, May 30, 2008

Department of Education Stresses Summer Food Service

The Michigan Department of Education this week noted that the state has available a lunch program that can help meet the summer nutritional needs of needy students.

The Summer Food Service Program ensures that children can continue receiving nutritious midday meals on school playgrounds and in parks, camps and other sites where they traditionally gather during summer vacation.

The Department, however, notes that fewer than 15 percent of the children who receive free and reduced-price meals during the school year participate in the program.

"This is a vital need children have during the summer months," said State Board of Education Kathleen **STRAUS**. "As family budgets are tightened, it's reassuring to know that there are places children can go during the summer to get nutritious meals. This is a healthy safety net for school children."

There are 164 local Summer Food Program sponsors in Michigan serving nutritious meals at 950 sites across the state. For more information go to: www.michigan.gov/sfsp



June 3, 2008

Book an aid for relatives raising children

Haslett writer tells families they're not alone, help exists

Kathleen Lavey
Lansing State Journal

HASLETT - Helene LaBrecque Ellis has two key messages for grandparents, aunts, uncles and others who wind up caring for relatives' children.

You are not alone.

Help is available.

The Haslett woman shares resources, tips and more in her new book, "A Kinship Guide to Rescuing Children" (Chicago Road Publishing, \$16.95).

Her reason for writing the book was simple.

"There was really nothing out there for families, unless a community was lucky enough to have a kinship care advocate," Ellis said.

The book is a useful tool, said Ama Agyemang, program coordinator for Michigan State University's Kinship Care Resource Center.

"Definitely, it helps kinship caregivers and professionals navigate the resources," she said. "It's very relevant."

Ellis has an English degree from Western Michigan University and studied counseling at Siena Heights College. She got involved in kinship care issues while working as a coordinator of community resources to prevent child abuse.

Ellis and her husband, Joel, have three grown children and seven grandchildren. She agreed to share some thoughts about the book:

- How wide-ranging is the issue of kinship care?
- "We had census questions on this in 1990 and then in 2000 in the U.S. In 2000, it had grown by 13 percent. The word is, in states that do their own censuses, it is increasing. There are about 3,000 kinship families in our five-county area here." (Ingham, Eaton, Clinton, Shiawassee and Livingston counties).
- What are some of the issues kinship families face?
- "One of the big things that I've observed with kinship families is that they almost all feel very alone in dealing with the outside entities of the world.

"They have a lot of issues with the children because they have traumatized children. Children are away from the parents for a reason.

"The big issues are really dealing with social services, with legal entanglements, with schools and trying to get a legal authority for medical care."

- Who is the target audience for the book?
- "I wrote this book twice - three times, actually. The first draft was really scrambling and putting it all together. I had a lot of families calling me, which was really a motivation. The second writing was academic. It was almost written to social workers. Then, I decided to write it just as if I was talking to families in their houses, and that was really when the information started flowing more freely."
- What is the best thing others can do to support people who are in this situation?
- "It's neighbors being able to say to a grandfamily or a relative, 'Can I take the kids on this day?' or 'Do you need a ride someplace?'

"Transportation is a huge issue for some of the kinship providers. Beyond that, just being a friend, being available, directing them to resources you know about, those are all helpful."

- Do you plan to do another guide?
- "Hopefully, there will be a second edition because I'm seeing and learning a lot since this was published."

Contact Kathleen Lavey at 377-1251 or klavey@lsj.com.

Youths get adults to listen up

Next advice: Do something to help

BY LORI HIGGINS • FREE PRESS EDUCATION WRITER • June 3, 2008

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Paul Trawinski stood before a group of policy makers and children's advocates and told them their presence at a forum Monday morning shows they care about kids like him who struggle in their path toward a high school diploma. But later, he said that presence wasn't enough.

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"They actually have to do something," Trawinski said at Churchill Community Education Center in Royal Oak. Like several of the other teens and young adults who spoke at a Youth Voices Changing Public Policy forum, Trawinski, 18, lives at Common Ground Sanctuary, which has a shelter program in Royal Oak for youths in crisis.

The forum was an opportunity for business, community, government and school leaders to hear from a segment of the youth population whose voices are often overlooked. It was sponsored by Michigan's Children, the State Shared Youth Vision Partnership, Royal Oak Neighborhood Schools, Common Ground Sanctuary and Oakland Schools.

The adults heard from homeless youths. From teens who struggled in big high schools. Teens who have dropped out. Teens who are grappling with personal and family struggles.

They heard from Larry High, 17, of Royal Oak, who recently graduated from Churchill Community High School, an alternative high school in Royal Oak Neighborhood Schools. He told the audience that his early years in school were easy, but once he got to high school he struggled. He dropped out because he faltered in the big environment.

But at Churchill, with its smaller environment, "I found it easier to fit in."

What worked, High said, was the connection he formed with adults who he said cared about him and urged him to achieve.

"You felt like you were talking to a friend, rather than a teacher," he said.

It was a common thread through all the youth speeches Monday and in the discussions that ensued. The speakers said
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Youths get adults to listen up

young people often are silent about their struggles because no adult has connected with them. Adults need to reach out to them, they said.

"Kids don't like to speak out. You have to build trust," said Thaddeus Williams, 21, a Common Ground resident.

He described his family life, saying he was taken from his parents at an early age. The disruption, he said, made it "hard to focus on school."

Jim Perlaki, vice president of community intervention services at Common Ground, said Monday's discussion was important for people who may advocate on behalf of children but don't interact with them on a day-to-day basis.

"Sometimes we forget that we need to listen to young people and what they have to say," Perlaki said.

The students said it was important to have adults to listen to their stories. But they said such forums shouldn't be a onetime thing.

"They have to come together more. I will be mad if I don't hear there are other" forums, Trawinski said.

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June 3, 2008

Marshall man gets life in prison in death of 4-year-old girl

Morning update

Associated Press

BATTLE CREEK, Mich. - A 21-year-old Marshall man convicted of second-degree murder in the death of a 4-year-old girl who had sustained head injuries has been sentenced to life in prison.

Chadwick Damon was sentenced Monday in Calhoun County Circuit Court in the July 17 death of Mackenzie VandenHeede of Marshall, the daughter of Damon's girlfriend. He was convicted last month.

Damon apologized at his sentencing, saying he "loved Mackenzie more than anything."

Damon was living with the girl and her mother when authorities say the child was struck hard enough in the back of the head on July 12 to cause bleeding in her brain and her death five days later.

Under the sentence, Damon could be paroled.



Flint Township native admits in New York court to disposing of newborn in trash can

Posted by Ron Fonger | The Flint Journal June 02, 2008 16:47PM

FLINT TOWNSHIP -- A college student from here admitted today that she caused the death of her newborn son in a Watertown, N.Y., hotel room and then disposed of the child's body in a trash can, a New York state newspaper is reporting.

Andrea M. Kline, 22, pleaded guilty to criminally negligent homicide, tampering with physical evidence and endangering the welfare of a child, according to the [Watertown Daily Times Web site](#).

The plea means the Kline case will not go to trial as scheduled Tuesday.

Kline was accused of causing her newborn child's death on Feb. 5, 2007. Prosecutors said the 2005 Powers Catholic High School graduate killed the infant and left his body in a trash can. The baby died of blunt force trauma, prosecutors have said.

Kline's attorney has said his client never meant to kill her child but was in shock after going into labor and may have caused the injuries by trying to pull him from the birth canal.

The Flint Journal could not immediately reach Kline's family for comment.

The Watertown newspaper reported that Kline is expected to be sentenced Aug. 4 to a year in jail followed by five years' probation supervision.

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June 2, 2008

Homeless: Lansing's "Back 40" is a symptom of bigger problems to solve

Our opinions

Lansing once again confronts its struggle with homelessness in the form of a recent slaying on vacant land near a homeless shelter.

The so-called "Back 40" is about 5 acres that sits behind the Volunteers of America shelter and other businesses on North Larch Street, set between Saginaw and Shiawassee streets. To the east, it's bounded by railroad tracks and a line of trees.

Part of the land belongs to a development company and part to a leasing company.

Last month, a homeless man was killed. Two people have been arrested in connection with the case; one is charged in the killing and the other as an accessory.

This is not the first problem at this site. After a stabbing in the area in 2000, city officials removed several shanty structures and "evicted" the homeless who stayed there.

Over time, though, homeless people have returned to an area they consider relatively safe because it is near to the shelter and even the LPD's North Precinct.

It would be a mistake to leave this problem at the door of the private property owners, however.

Homelessness is a complex issue and not easy to combat. Certainly in these times economics is a challenging factor.

But as a group, the homeless are more likely to have substance abuse problems or mental illness issues. Getting a roof over their heads treats a symptom of their situation, but does not come anywhere near addressing the difficult underlying issues.

City officials don't plan to clear out the "Back 40" this time, and that's the right move. The fact that people are still homeless and still congregating there despite such efforts in the past is a pretty good indication that drastic measures won't solve the problem in the long run.

Instead, the city will stay focused on a 10-year plan to help the homeless by addressing some of those underlying causes. That's a more challenging solution, but one likely to have more benefits in the long run.
